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Politicians and Statesmen

For more than a century Iowa has enjoyed able political leaders at both the state and national level. Many of these men were privileged to take part in events which were of fundamental importance in the building of our modern commonwealth. Although our territorial history was relatively brief (covering a period of only ten years from the establishment of the Territory of Wisconsin in 1836 to the admission of Iowa into the Union in 1846), our statesmen were outstanding.

One of these outstanding men was George Wallace Jones, who, during the winter of 1837-1838, was serving as Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Wisconsin. Born at Vincennes in the Territory of Indiana in 1804, Jones studied at Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, before moving to Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, in 1825, to read law in his brother-in-law's office. Legal work seems to have undermined his health, however, and in 1827 Jones moved to Sinsinawa Mound in southwestern Wisconsin directly opposite present-day Dubuque. He fought in the Black Hawk War with Henry Dodge in 1832. Soon afterwards he was elected Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Wisconsin.

George Wallace Jones was a busy Delegate. "I drew my own bills and resolutions to secure the action of Congress," he wrote years later. "In those days, I was full of energy and tact, never tiring in my efforts to serve my constituents, and I did not ask for any of the eleven or twelve offices which were voluntarily conferred upon me." One of the most important measures confronting Jones was the division of the Territory of Wisconsin and the creation of a separate Territory of Iowa west of the Mississippi. His chief opponent in this measure was Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, who was unalterably opposed to the creation of more free territory because of the anti-slavery crusade. The story of how Jones succeeded in this difficult assignment is a classic in Iowa history. Let him tell his own story:

That winter I escorted Miss Anna Calhoun home to her father's boarding house, at the corner of D and Eighth Streets, near Pennsylvania Ave., from a party which was given by Senator Linn and myself at the corner of B and Third Streets, Washington City. As we waited at the door for the porter at about 12 or 1 o'clock, Miss Calhoun said: "General, I do not know how I can ever return the compliments and favors you have shown me."

"You can, Miss Calhoun, do me a great service. To-morrow my bill to establish the Territory of Iowa is to be considered in the Senate, it having already passed the House. Your father, although my good friend, is opposed to my bill. To-morrow morning, when he comes down to breakfast, put your lovely arm around his neck and ask

him to vote for my bill." She was a very beautiful, accomplished, and talented young lady and the idol of her father.

"I'll do my best, General, and I know I shall succeed, as my father never refuses me anything."

"Well," I said, "Miss Calhoun, I'll come to see you tomorrow forenoon at about 11 o'clock to hear what your success may have been." I went as I had promised, when she told me that her father said that his constituents would never forgive him if he should consent to the passage of that bill, to lay the foundation of another abolition State, although he would be very glad to serve me as he had high regard for me. I thanked her and said: "I will now go and send your admirer, our mutual friend, Mr. C. G. Clemson, to escort you to the Senate; take your seat over Colonel Benton's on the Democratic side. When I send you my card, come down, send your card for your father, and take him into the library and keep him there until I call for you." She replied: "General, I'll do my utmost to serve you."

When the Senate proceeded to business I was called by Clayton of Delaware, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and Walker of Mississippi, Chairman of the Committee of Public Lands, and seated between them. After getting my bills through to establish two new land districts, one at Burlington and the other at Dubuque, and several other bills, I called a page and told him to take my card to Miss Calhoun, whom I pointed out to him, and to wait on her. He went up with my card, and I saw him deliver it. Soon she was escorted to the door of the Senate by Mr. C. G. Clemson, and sent her card to her father, and I saw him get up and walk out of the Senate. "Now," said I, "Senator Clayton, please call up my bill to establish the Territory of Iowa." In a few minutes my bill was passed, Iowa was a Territory, and the Senate adjourned.

I walked into the library, where Mr. Calhoun, his daughter and Mr. Clemson were. Mr. Calhoun asked me: "What was going on in the Senate?" I replied: "The Senate has adjourned and the bill to create Iowa has been passed." Then turning to his daughter he said: "Oh, Anna, you bad girl, you have prevented my making a speech to oppose that bill, as I would have done and done successfully, as the time for the consideration of Territorial bills has expired."

Mr. Clemson afterwards married Miss Calhoun and they raised a family of ten children.

On my return home my constituents gave me a fine dinner at the Waples House on the site now occupied by the new Julien House, and upon being toasted for having had Iowa created a separate Territory, I told of the circumstances of Miss Calhoun's aid, which caused great laughter and shouting.

His work in the creation of the Territory of Iowa makes George Wallace Jones one of the real builders of the Hawkeye State.

During the next eight years the people of the newly created Territory of Iowa spent much of their spare time debating whether or not Iowa should seek admission into the Union. Finally, in 1844, statehood was agreed upon and a constitutional convention called. Seventy-two men (51 Democrats and 21 Whigs) drew up the Constitution of 1844, which provided for the Lucas boundaries, including both the Mississippi and Missouri, but substituting southeastern Minnesota between the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers as far north as present-day Saint Paul for our modern

northwesternmost counties. This meant a state far larger than Iowa today. Congress accepted the Constitution of 1844 but violently opposed such a large state; the Nicollet boundaries accordingly were substituted for the Lucas boundaries, thereby depriving Iowa of the Missouri River and the Missouri slope and greatly reducing the area of Iowa as it is today. It now remained for the people to accept the Constitution of 1844 with the new boundaries, and statehood would be achieved. Our Delegate to Congress, Augustus C. Dodge of Burlington, had originally sponsored the Lucas boundaries, but when Congress substituted the Nicollet boundaries, Mr. Dodge reluctantly accepted the change and wrote his constituents that Iowa would never be able to obtain *one more square mile* of area.

Dodge's recommendation was not acceptable to many of his friends. These builders of our Hawkeye State were not the kind of men who placed party loyalty above the national welfare. They were men of high ideals, great personal courage, and strong leadership. They were men who would not cower when someone cracked the party whip.

Opposition to the Congressional boundaries soon sprang up in Iowa. Many of the leading Democrats (including Shepherd Leffler, who had served as president of the Constitutional Convention of 1844) were outspoken in their opposition. The ringleaders of this fight to retain the Missouri

River as the western boundary of Iowa were Shepherd Leffler, Edward Johnstone, James W. "Old Timber" Woods, Frederick D. Mills, Theodore S. Parvin, and Enoch W. Eastman. Mills, Parvin, and Eastman were especially active in their opposition, stumping the state at their own expense in order to defeat the Constitution of 1844 with its Nicollet boundaries.

Let us say a few words about Mills, Parvin, and Eastman, for they were the firebrands of this revolt. Frederick D. Mills concentrated his attacks on the Nicollet boundaries in southeastern Iowa — or the First District. He had been graduated from Yale in 1840 and settled in Iowa in 1841, becoming one of Burlington's ablest lawyers.

Soon after the outbreak of the Mexican War, Mills was commissioned a major in the United States Army and served with the Fifteenth United States Infantry. He fought under General Winfield Scott, and was slain while leading a detachment of troops in pursuit of Santa Anna at the battle of Churubusco. His name has been inscribed on a mural tablet in the chapel of the Military Academy at West Point as one of the heroes of Churubusco. The Third General Assembly of Iowa recognized his services by naming Mills County on the banks of the Missouri in his honor.

Theodore S. Parvin, who probably made more unusual and lasting contributions to Iowa history than any other man, agreed to oppose ratification

of the Constitution with the Nicollet boundaries in the Second District. Born in New Jersey in 1817, Parvin attended the public schools at Cincinnati, Ohio, and was graduated from Woodworth College in 1833, the same year permanent white settlement began in Iowa. Parvin then studied law and was graduated from the Cincinnati Law School in 1837. The following year he came to the Territory of Iowa as the private secretary of Governor Robert Lucas.

In the years that followed, Parvin served as territorial librarian, United States district attorney, secretary to the territorial council, clerk of the United States District Court, county judge, register of the Iowa land office, librarian and professor of natural science at the State University, curator and secretary of the State Historical Society of Iowa, one of the organizers of the Iowa State Teachers Association, and its president in 1867, one of the founders of the Masonic order in Iowa, grand master and grand secretary of the Masonic Lodge, and founder of the Masonic Library at Cedar Rapids. Between 1838 and 1873 Parvin kept a daily weather record that is the most important single document of this kind in Iowa history. A believer in good government, education, the recording of history, and moral virtues, Parvin still had time to battle for the preservation of the Missouri River as Iowa's western boundary.

But it is with Enoch W. Eastman that Iowans

should become especially familiar. Eastman was born in New Hampshire in 1810. He taught school, studied law, and was admitted to the New Hampshire bar in 1840. Four years later he crossed the Mississippi and began practicing law at Burlington. The Territory of Iowa quickly became his second home. Eastman watched with interest the work of the Constitutional Convention of 1844. He strongly endorsed the Lucas boundaries and violently opposed the efforts of Congress to rob Iowa of its natural western boundary. Eastman moved to Oskaloosa in 1847, and to Eldora in 1857, where he lived until his death in 1885. Throughout his professional career he built a high reputation as a lawyer and a man of courage and honor.

These six "No" men had several characteristics in common. They were all young men when they crossed the Mississippi, some actually arriving before the Territory of Iowa was created in 1838. They were men with legal training, most of them were practicing law, but all had many other interests. They were men of sound judgment, stark courage, and unswerving loyalty. They were men who put the welfare of the people of Iowa above their own personal advantage. Although others joined in this fight to retain the Missouri as our western border, these six "No" men have generally been accorded the lion's share of the credit for winning this fight. Even so, the Constitution of 1844 was defeated by only a scant majority.

In this eventful year 1952 (when politicians and statesmen are stalking the Hawkeye State, when international tensions run high and national and state issues once more confront the electorate, when the tawny Missouri and the mighty Mississippi flow at flood stage along our western and eastern borders, leaving uncounted destruction in their wake) Iowans should remember these six "No" men, more especially Enoch W. Eastman, who has left one of our most cherished mottoes. For, engraved on the Iowa stone of the Washington Monument in the Nation's capital are the words of the immortal Eastman — "Iowa. Her affections, like the rivers of her borders, flow to an inseparable Union."

The contributions of other mighty statesmen ought well to be recounted. Iowa has honored James Harlan and Samuel Jordan Kirkwood by placing their statues in the Hall of Fame in the National Capitol in Washington. The name of James W. Grimes stands close beside that of Harlan and Kirkwood — few men have contributed as much to the Iowa scene as this founder of the Republican party. As governor and Republican leader he may be considered as one of the architects of the Constitution of 1857. When Grimes, stricken with paralysis, was carried into the United States Senate in 1868 to cast the vote that saved President Andrew Johnson from conviction, he reached the apex of his career as a statesman. By this vote,

Grimes temporarily fell from favor among most Iowa Republicans. Before his death in 1872, the star of James W. Grimes was steadily rising; today he is ranked among the Iowa great of all times.

The names of such men as William Boyd Allison, Albert Baird Cummins, and Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver are writ large among these builders of the Hawkeye State. Allison served six terms as a United States Senator, a record that few have approached in that body. Cummins served three terms as Governor of Iowa before entering the United States Senate for three successive terms. Dolliver's fame as an orator was attested in 1909 when he was chosen, with William Jennings Bryan, to represent the United States as orators of the day at the impressive ceremonies surrounding the laying of the cornerstone of the Lincoln Monument at Springfield, Illinois.

Iowans have served with equal distinction in the House, and one man, David B. Henderson, actually became Speaker of that important legislative body. Iowa-born Herbert Hoover became President of the United States. Henry A. Wallace was named Vice President. Iowans have been selected for seven different cabinet posts: three different Iowans have served as Secretary of War, Secretary of the Interior, and Secretary of Commerce. Four Iowans have been appointed as Secretary of Agriculture. Two men — Samuel Freeman Miller and Wiley B. Rutledge — have served on the

United States Supreme Court with distinction. Most of these men built much of character and personality into the Hawkeye State before achieving such high offices.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN